Chapter 6

Publicity and External Relations

6.1 Public support is essential to the promotion and development of ombudsmanship. In striving for objective, independent and impartial investigation, we endeavour to communicate with the public and various stakeholders to promote a positive view of complaints.

Fig. 6.1 The Ombudsman in Press Event

Promotion Campaign in Mass Media

6.2 With the increased public awareness of our role and mission, evidenced by the rising number of enquiries and complaints, we have adjusted our promotion strategies. Instead of broadcasting our Announcement of Public Interest ("API") film clip, greater emphasis has been placed on disseminating fuller information on our investigative work through media releases and press conferences.

Fig. 6.2

Press Conferences/Public Announcements	
26 June 2008	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on effectiveness of Integrated Call Centre in handling complaints • Announcement of findings of anonymised investigation into complaints against Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority • Declaration of direct investigation into system for development of question papers in public examinations
5 October 2008	• Declaration of direct investigation into Housing Department's handling of complaints involving property damage or minor injuries
20 November 2008	• Declaration of direct investigation into granting of disability allowance and processing of appeals by Social Welfare Department
11 December 2008	• Declaration of direct investigation into free admission scheme for leisure facilities by Leisure and Cultural Services Department
18 December 2008	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on: i. Government's measures for street management ii. Control of roadside banners iii. Prevention of abuse of special grants under the CSSA scheme
15 January 2009	• Declaration of direct investigation into the monitoring of lift safety by Electrical and Mechanical Services Department
26 February 2009	• Declaration of direct investigation into the administration of the Code on Access to Information
19 March 2009	• Declaration of direct investigation into the procedures for enforcing the Driving-offence Points System by Transport Department
26 March 2009	• Announcement of findings of direct investigation on: i. Support for students with specific learning difficulties ii. Free admission scheme for using Leisure and Cultural Services Department's leisure facilities from July to September 2008

6.3 This year, we announced at our press conferences the results of six direct investigations as well as an investigation into topical complaints, we also declared the initiation of seven direct investigations. Summaries of the investigation reports were also publicised through the *OmbudsNews*, our newsletter, apart from being uploaded on our website.

Resource Centre

6.4 We operate a Resource Centre, which houses a wealth of Ombudsman-related publications, including our *OmbudsNews*, video recordings and news clips on our activities as well as periodicals from overseas ombudsman offices.

6.5 Members of the public are welcome to visit our Resource Centre on individual or group basis. This year, there were visitor groups from all walks of life, ranging from youth and elderly centres to schools and other community organisations. During the visits, our staff brief visitors on our role and invite them to express views on our operation. We regard these visits as important opportunities for civic education and exchange of views. In 2008/09, we had about 678 persons from 16 groups visiting our Office.

6.6 We strongly believe that citizens should be nurtured with proper social and civil values from their childhood. Therefore, the younger generation has always been the target of our promotional programmes and activities. Our experience has, however, revealed that primary school pupils, probably due to their younger age, are not as receptive as secondary school students to our messages. In this connection, we have adjusted our focus this year by arranging more talks for secondary school students. In the coming year, we shall continue in this direction and work out tailor-made programmes to maximise the effect of our educational initiatives.

Fig. 6.3

Group Visits to Resource Centre		
From	**Groups**	**Visitors**
Schools	7	253
Youth centres	4	190
Elderly centres	4	200
Others	1	35
Total	**16**	**678**

Publications

6.7 This year, we have updated our "Complaint Form", "Publicity Leaflet" and "Performance Pledge" for clearer and accurate information on our service. These publications are available in our Resource Centre, on our website and in District Offices of the Home Affairs Department.

Fig. 6.4 Publications of our Office (Performance Pledge, Complaint Form, Leaflet, Tips Booklet)

Chapter 6

Publicity and External Relations

The Ombudsman's Awards

6.8 We believe positive service culture should be applauded and encouraged among Government departments and public bodies. In this connection, we honour efforts of public organisations and their officers exemplary in handling complaints and improving public administration with The Ombudsman's Awards annually. In October 2008, The Ombudsman presented the Awards to the Immigration Department (Grand Award), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Department of Health, and also 21 public officers. Over 130 representatives from more than 25 public organisations witnessed this honourable occasion.

Fig. 6.5 The Ombudsman's Awards Presentation Ceremony

Fig. 6.6

Winning Organisations for 2008
• Immigration Department (Grand Award)
• Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
• Department of Health

Fig. 6.7

Individual Awards for 2008

Organisation	No. of Awardees
Buildings Department	1
Companies Registry	1
Correctional Services Department	1
Customs and Excise Department	1
Drainage Services Department	1
Efficiency Unit	1
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department	1
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	2
Highways Department	1
Hospital Authority	1
Housing Department	2
Immigration Department	1
Inland Revenue Department	1
Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority	1
Marine Department	1
Social Welfare Department	1
Transport Department	1
Urban Renewal Authority	1
Water Supplies Department	1

Seminars

6.9 We promote the mission of the Office among different sectors by organising seminars periodically. In April 2008, we organised a seminar for assistants of District Councillors.

6.10 Later in mid-May, I also met with Chairmen and Vice-chairmen of the 18 District Councils, who are well positioned to feel the pulse of the

community. On the occasion, I made use of the opportunity to share with the District Councillors feedback on issues of community concern. That was a most fruitful exchange on improving public administration.

Outreach Talks

6.11 Apart from receiving visitors, we also reach out to deliver talks to Government departments, schools, universities and centres for the elderly. This year, we visited a total of seven Government departments and public organisations.

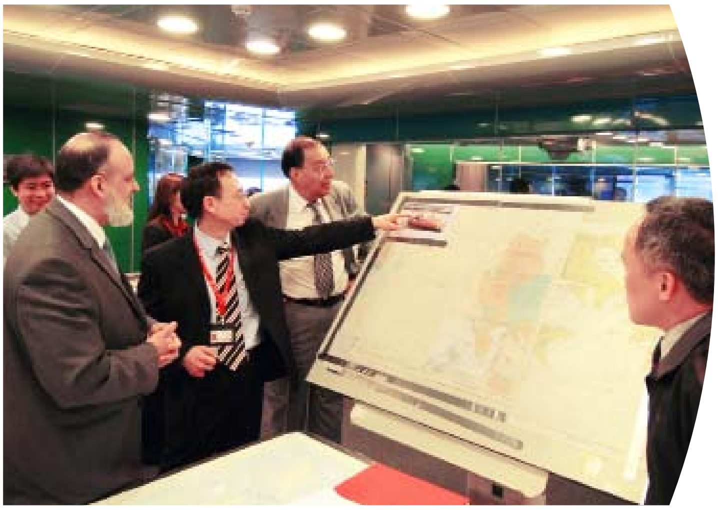

Fig. 6.8 JPs' Visit to Marine Department

Meeting with Legislative Councillors

6.12 I meet with Members of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") annually to keep them abreast of our work and daily operation.

6.13 The meeting on 9 December 2008 was my last meeting with Members in my tenure as The Ombudsman. We had frank and open exchanges on the role of The Ombudsman, as well as areas of special concern and public interest which I had encountered over the years. Members also expressed their views on the future development of the ombudsman system in Hong Kong in the light of the recent review of The Ombudsman's jurisdiction. In conclusion, they were all supportive of the role of The Ombudsman as watchdog for fair and efficient public administration.

Support from Justices of the Peace

6.14 Since 1996, over 500 non-official Justices of the Peace ("JPs") have been enlisted in our JPs Assistance Scheme. We appreciate their support in spreading the message of ombudsmanship and strengthening linkage between the community and the Office throughout the years. To keep our JP members updated on the operation of public services, we organise regular visits to Government departments and public organisations in our Schedule 1 to The Ombudsman Ordinance. This year, we arranged for them visits to the Marine Department and the Urban Renewal Authority. They highly valued these opportunities for widening their horizon in the operations and delivery of public services.

Institutional Liaison and Exchange with the Mainland

6.15 As the Secretary of both the International Ombudsman Institute ("IOI") and the Asian Ombudsman Association ("AOA"), I actively participate in their functions to maintain close connections with our counterparts worldwide. This year, I attended the AOA Board of Directors Meeting in Iran in late April 2008.

6.16 My office hosted this year's annual IOI Board of Directors Meeting from 5 to 8 November 2008. After the Board meeting, a visit to the Commission Against Corruption of Macao was arranged for Board Members and their accompanying persons.

6.17 Immediately following the activities in Hong Kong, the IOI President and several Board Members including myself visited Beijing at the invitation of the Ministry of Supervision ("MOS") of China. The delegation was received personally by

Fig. 6.9
IOI Board of Directors Meeting

the Minister of Supervision. Both the President and Members were briefed on China's system of supervision and the policy and work priorities of MOS with special emphasis on anti-corruption and administrative supervision of Government agencies in China. Through meetings and visits, IOI Members gained insight into the historical, cultural and political background of the supervisory system in China.

6.18 I consider these activities not only an effective platform to exchange views and share experience with our counterparts on matters of common concern but also opportunities to showcase Hong Kong as a sophisticated city and to maintain its status in the international arena. Moreover, this reinforces our role in strengthening links between China with the regional and international ombudsmen.

6.19 Since 1996, we have maintained an exchange programme with the China Supervision Institute. The annual exchange visit for 2008/09 was, however, suspended due to the catastrophic earthquake in Sichuan in May 2008. We will liaise with the Institute for resuming the programme.

6.20 Despite suspension of exchange visits, we have continued to conduct briefing sessions on our jurisdiction and *modus operandi* for groups from the Mainland. This year, we delivered talks to nine groups comprising 151 participants.

Looking Forward

6.21 We will regularly review our promotion strategies, assess the effectiveness of our activities and adjust our programmes in the light of the changing economic and socio-political scene.